

Message Text

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ACTION DHA-02

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2145

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM KS
SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT COMMENTED ON BY MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

REF: STATE 56043, STATE 55173, STATE 38407

1. FOLLOWING REMARKS ON KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT RELEASED BY CONGRESS HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO TAEWAN YU, DIRECTOR, DEPT. OF FOREIGN PRESS, THE KOREAN OVERSEAS INFORMATION SERVICE, AND WERE DISTRIBUTED AS MCUI PRESS RELEASE TO FOREIGN PRESS IN SEOUL EVENING OF 15 MARCH.

BEGIN TEXT

IT IS REGRETTABLE THAT THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT HAS TO POINT OUT THAT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S REPORT ON THE ALLEGED KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION TO THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE NOT ONLY LACKS AN ACCURATE GRASP OF THE MATTER BUT LEAVES THE IMPRESSION THAT IT IS WRITTEN FROM BIASED PRECONCEPTIONS.

EMERGENCY DECREE NO. 9 WAS ISSUED IN ACCORDANCD WITH THE CONSTITUTION WHICH WAS APPROVED TWICE BY AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF THE KOREAN PEOPLE WITHIN A FREE ATMOSPHERE.

(PARA) IT IS OUR POSITION THAT NO GOVERNMENT THAT CRITICISES ANOTHER NATION'S EXERCISE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AND SOVEREIGN RIGHTS CAN AVOID CRITICISM FOR ITS INTERFERENCE IN ANOTHER'S
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DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.
THE KOREAN JUDICIARY MAINTAINS STRICT INDEPENDENCE AND CAN NOT AND WILL NOT BE INFLUENCED. WE REJECT OUTRIGHT THE CLAIM OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TRIED AND FOUND GUILTY THAT THERE DOES NOT EXIST AN INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY IN KOREA. WE BELIEVE THAT WERE SUCH A CLAIM VALID, LAW AND ORDER WOULD BE DESTROYED AND IN FACT THERE WOULD BE ONLY AN UNSTABLE

FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS.

WE WOULD LIKE TO MAKE IT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR ONCE AGAIN THAT WE DO NOT PRACTICE PRIOR CENSORSHIP OF THE PRESS, AND WE REGRET THAT THE REPORT HAS MISTAKEN THE FACT THAT JOURNALISTS REGULATE THEMSELVES IN REPORTING IMPORTANT NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES - A PRACTICE COMMON IN OTHER COUNTRIES - AS PRIOR CENSORSHIP OF THE PRESS.

FACED WITH AN AGGRESSIVE, ADVENTUROUS AND UNPREDICTABLE NORTH KOREAN REGIME, OUR GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE HAVE MADE STRENUOUS EFFORTS UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES TO MAINTAIN LIBERTY, PEACE AND PROGRESS IN THIS AREA, AND WE ARE DETERMINED TO PURSUE THAT GOAL IN THE FUTURE.

(PARA) WE STRESS THAT IT WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE FOR THE UNITED STATES TO SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS WITH CONTINUED UNDERSTANDING AND PATIENCE RATHER THAN TO MAKE RASH JUDGEMENTS BASED ON MISINTERPRETATIONS. END TEXT.

2. DEPARTMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT TO CONGRESS WAS HANDED TO YI SANG-HUN, CHIEF OF NORTH AMERICA DIVISION I OF MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ON MARCH 14. EMBOFF REVIEWED POINTS AS DIRECTED BY STATE 38407. YI ASKED ABOUT GUIDANCE TO DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN FOR HANDLING PRESS QUESTIONS, AND HE WAS PROVIDED WITH INFORMATION IN STATE 56043.

3. ACCORDING ACTING AMERICAN AFFAIRS BUREAU CHIEF YI SANG-HEUN ABOVE REMARKS CONSTITUTE OFFICIAL ROKG REACTION AND MOFA PLANS NO FURTHER RELEASE ITSELF.

4. COMMENT: WHILE RELEASE CONTAINS SOME STRONG AS WELL AS CONFIDENTIAL

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INACCURATE STATEMENTS, WE FIND IT RELATIVELY LOW KEY, CERTAINLY WHEN COMPARED TO MCUI STATEMENT AT END DECEMBER ON WASHINGTON SCANDALS. CONSISTENT WITH REGULAR ROKG LINE ON HUMAN RIGHTS THESE DAYS, FOR MOST PART RELEASE RETREATS BEHIND FACADE OF LEGALITY, AND ONLY SPECIFIC ANSWER TO POINTS IN U.S. REPORT IS CLAIM ROKG DOES NOT PRACTICE PRIOR CENSORSHIP OF THE PRESS -- A HIGHLY DUBIOUS CLAIM BY THE WAY. WE ALSO NOTE THAT UNLIKE WASHINGTON SCANDAL RELEASE IN THIS CASE REPORTERS WERE NOT CALLED TO PRESS CONFERENCE - RELEASE WAS DELIVERED TO PRESS OFFICES - AND REMARKS WERE ATTRIBUTED NOT TO MINISTER BUT TO KOIS OFFICIAL. PROBABLY BEST REACTION FROM ITS OWN POINT OF VIEW WOULD HAVE BEEN NO REACTION AT ALL. BUT GIVEN APPARENT COMPULSION TO SAY SOMETHING, ROKG HAS AT LEAST MADE AN EFFORT TO AVOID OVERPLAYING ITS REBUTTAL AND DRAWING FURTHER ATTENTION TO KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION.
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